

PASTG News Notes - December 2000

Congratulations Sherri Buxton!

As most of you know, Drs. Horn and Knipling recently announced the selection of our own Sherri L. Buxton as the recipient of the ARS Secretary of the Year Award. This is an extremely prestigious award and our entire Area is proud to salute Sherri on her accomplishment.

This award annually recognizes the outstanding achievements and creative efforts of ARS secretaries at the Headquarters level, including Office of the Administrator and immediate staff, National Program Staff, Administrative and Financial Management staff, National Agricultural Library staff, and secretarial or clerical positions in the Area Directors' Offices and Area Administrative Offices or any other secretarial/clerical employees who are not eligible for consideration within their areas.

Sherri was nominated for her key role in establishing and maintaining a leadership role in the Midwest Area Program Administrative Support Task Group. She is the permanent co-chair of this group and provides a high level of expertise and leadership to the PASTG and all secretaries within and outside of this Area. Sherri regularly facilitates meetings and conference calls to ensure objectives and goals are met. Some of the more noteworthy accomplishments include the completion of the Midwest Area's Standard Operating Procedures manual (which has now been used as a standard and reference for other ARS Secretarial Task Groups), the initiation of the Midwest Area Training Scholarship program, the organization of the 1998 first Area Secretarial/Clerical Staff meeting and also the planning of the one to come in 2001, the implementation of the Mentoring program, the organization and facilitation of the selection of the Midwest Area Secretary of the Year, as well as many other accomplishments too numerous to mention here. Ms. Buxton plays a key role in increasing networking and improving communication among secretaries in the MWA.

Sherri will be recognized at the ARS Annual Recognition Program in Beltsville, Maryland on February 7, 2001. We extend our heartiest congratulations to Sherri on a job very well done!

Meet Marilyn Paul, Program Analyst for the MWA

The Program Administrative Support Task Group met in Peoria, November 6-9, 2000 to begin planning for the Program Administrative Support Staff Meeting to be held next June. Meeting is beneficial in so many ways. We not only began planning our summer meeting, we also had a chance to get current on what's happening in the Area Office. Because you are our "customers," we pass the information to you via this newsletter.

One of our agenda items was meeting with Marilyn Paul, the Program Analyst for the Area. As most of you know, she formerly was the Executive Assistant to Terry Nelsen, the Assistant Director. However, since joining the Area Office in 1991, she has done ARS-115s and been backup to Pat Bothast. In 1995, she was given the program responsibilities of ten Management Units. Essentially, this meant that she was performing for those ten MUs the same duties Pat was performing for the others. I'm sure many, if not most, of you have talked to Marilyn one time or

another.

She's agreed to let me tell you that she's married to Mike Paul, who retired from the Property Management position in the Area in 1995, and they have one son and daughter-in-law and two grandsons, ages 16 & 17. Marilyn is very proud of her son and family who live in North Carolina, however she says they live TOO FAR AWAY.

In our meeting with Marilyn, which by-the-way was very informal, we talked about RMIS, OSQR and the interactions between us and Marilyn. Marilyn hopes she can provide excellent service to all scientists, Research Leaders, and support staff. That's her goal, and the purpose of her position.

Marilyn can provide help, support, and "how-to" on RMIS. She can also answer questions on program issues. She says she doesn't know nearly enough to answer everything, but she is willing to find answers to your questions or concerns. This includes questions on ARS-115s, ARS-425s, AD-416/417s and 550s in RMIS. Marilyn can also answer "why, when, and how to" with regard to OSQR, and the Peer Review process. Isn't that good news!

On grant proposals, Marilyn will work with Sherri and Marcia to obtain the Area Director's signature and FEDEX or FAX back to your MU. Specific Cooperative Agreement matters will be referred to Sue Shrout, although Marilyn will confer with her to get an answer for you, if necessary. We all know RMIS contains so many parts that it's hard to list them all, but consider Marilyn as a resource to use when you have a question about RMIS or program issues.

RMIS ID codes and passwords are sent to Marilyn, who works with Headquarter computer staff to get a new user started. Printing from RMIS requires a "printer setup" done by Paula Snell at 309-681-6575 or Scott Rieland at 301-504-4554. We also discussed RMIS and other types of training in our meeting. We agreed that both new user training and refresher training is a must. The plan of the PASTG is to develop mini-courses on needed subjects and offer them either on-site or in Peoria on a rotating schedule. This concept is in the developmental stage and will take some time to put in place, but count on it happening!! In the meantime, Marilyn is happy to provide one-on-one walk-throughs of any part of RMIS where you need assistance. Also remember that mentors are one of your first resources. Never hesitate to call or ask. Marilyn feels that it's her job to help in any way she can.

I guess, in a nutshell, the entire PASTG is very happy to feel the sense of cooperation that came about as a result of our meeting with Marilyn.

Travel Information by Sedina Lowe

Using Subsistence Code C, Conference Allowance - This became effective 2/7/2000.

It was not clear to me as how you used the Code C until I had to use it. One of the scientists returned from a conference and the hotel bill was more than per diem, but not 25% more. In this case I had to amend the Travel Authorization. On page 2, midway down the page where you use the P for Per Diem or A for Actual, you use the C and then put in the actual cost, rounded to the nearest dollar, of the hotel. The M&IE stays the same. This can now be approved by your travel

approving official at your agency and not be sent into the Area Office for approval.

So you want to design a web page! by Sandy Groneberg

I recently ran across the USDA Office of Communications Guidance for Production of a Home Page, and thought I would use it as a basis for the information in this article. If you wish to see the article in its entirety, the URL is: **<http://www.hqnet.usda.gov/intranet/docs/hpguide.htm>**

I think the best advice I have received in building web sites is "Keep the Page Layout Simple." You want your readers to obtain their information quickly. Also different browsers produce different results, so you will want to review the pages you do using several browsers. Remember that not everyone has "state-of-the-art" equipment, and trying to make your page more fancy may actually lose some readers.

One thing that has been amazing to me is the number of home pages that fail to clearly identify how their organization may be contacted. It is frustrating to have to search several pages before finally finding a phone number or mailing address for an institution. The first page of a web site should have the mailing address, email address of a contact person, phone and fax number for the facility clearly visible. It is also good to place an address tag on each document listing the contact person creating the page, the status of the document if it is incomplete, when the document was last revised and the URL.

Be consistent in all your pages with things like background, navigational menus and icons. Place them in the same location and order. Readers need to know they are still within your home page, and haven't strayed somewhere else. They also want to navigate quickly from one area to another, and this can be aided by consistency in your navigational tools.

Use larger and bolder heading typeface for headings, not as text emphasis, and use emphasis sparingly. Boldface, italic and words in all caps are hard to read and confusing, especially if they are all used in a single paragraph. Blinking items should be avoided. Keep headings, images and rule lines to a minimum so that the reader's eyes are drawn to the most important items on the page.

Text links should be single words or short phrases rather than lengthy statements. Links should be relevant to the current topic on the page, and one should avoid using "click here." Every page should be linked back to the home page or the top level of a section.

Try to write information clearly and concisely. Organize the document for quick scanning by using headings to highlight topics and lists to summarize. Lengthy paragraphs will tend to lose readers.

Use the "ALT" attribute with image tags to allow text-only browsers to see the appropriate text string in place of a graphic. Meta tags may also be used to improve search engine spider results.

If you are interested in building web pages, there are vast amounts of information available on the Internet. I wish you well in searching out information that will be helpful to you.

Timesaving Ideas by Georgetta Stonewall

Never type anything in WordPerfect twice! The second time you find yourself typing anything in a WordPerfect document (either version 6.1 or 8), you need to stop, go to a blank document, and choose from the menu "Tools" then "Macro" and then "Record". A dialog box will appear and you will need to give the macro you are creating a name. Make it short and easy to remember. Type the text into the document in which a new tool bar has appeared. After typing, you save the macro by choosing the square box icon on the far left of the tool bar. You will then be back in your original document which you can finish or exit as needed.

The next time you need the information you made into a macro, just play the macro. To play the macro, choose "Tools" then "Macro" and then "Play" (or use the hotkey which on my computer is the "Alt F10" key). The macro will appear in your document at the place where your cursor is blinking.

Example of things for which I use Macros: I do a lot of correspondence for the culture collection. I only want to type "Sincerely, 6 returns, the scientist's name, title, telephone number and fax number, once into a macro so I do not have to retype this on every letter. I use the SYs initials for the Macro name. Also because this correspondence must conform to legal requirements on sending out cultures under the Budapest Treaty, we have several standard paragraphs that must be included. Each SY has a list of these paragraphs which were named a number. When the SY writes his letter, he just lists at the bottom of the incoming letter a group of numbers and his initials. This will be turned into a full page letter by me. I have a macro named "disclaim" for the disclaimer which must be included in each manuscript.

Any questions about Macros, please feel free to call me at 309-681-6560.

Changing Faces in the MWA:

Ruth Harrison

Ruth Harrison has joined the Midwest Area Office Support Team as one of the Executive Assistants in the Area Director's Office. Ruth replaces Marilyn Paul who was selected as the Area Program Analyst. She will be providing secretarial and specialized office services to the Senior Management Team. Her primary areas of responsibility will include processing of manuscripts, germplasm releases, patents, and other varietal releases, and serving as Area control point for the ARS-115's, Request to Submit Manuscript for Publication. Ruth has been working at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research for the last 10 years and served as the Executive Assistant to the Center Director for the last six years. She can be reached by phone at 309-681-6209 and by email at rharrison@mwa.ars.usda.gov. Please welcome Ruth to the Area Office.

Julie Gribble

The Cereal Disease Laboratory, in St. Paul, MN, welcomes Ms. Julie Gribble. Julie is the new Program Assistant, replacing Rosalind Richards who retired in May. Julie will provide administrative support for program development, fiscal management, and research documentation, as well as managing the front office at the CDL. Julie was born a long stone's throw from Beltsville, MD. She has worked as a Federal employee for the Environmental Protection Agency since 1991, first in Washington, D.C., with a short interval in Raleigh, NC, and later in Lakewood, CO and Denver, CO. Before coming to the CDL she was a Program Assistant in the EPA, Criminal Investigations Division, National Crime Information Center in Denver. We welcome Julie and the

experience she brings to us.

Rebecca Holzinger

Becky Holzinger is returning to the Midwest Area Administrative Office Staff as a Contract Specialist. Becky has been working at NCAUR for the last several years as the Administrative Contracting Officer managing the A-76 contract. She will continue these responsibilities from within the Area Office Staff as well as assist with other Area contract needs as time permits. She can be reached by phone at 309-681-6616 and by email at rholzinger@mwa.ars.usda.gov.

Richard Houston

Richard Houston joins the MWA as an Engineer. Richard comes from the private sector where he previously worked as a project manager with Johnson Controls World Services in Rantoul, IL. Prior to that he worked as a project engineer with the Illinois Power Company. Richard will eventually get out to visit the locations and will be working with many of you in respect to your R&M and construction needs. Richard can be reached by phone at 309-681-6124 or by email at rhouston@mwa.ars.usda.gov.

Jerry King

Jerry King has rejoined the MWA staff as a Contracting Specialist. Many of you will recall that Jerry was previously a Purchasing Agent and Extramural Agreements Specialist at the MWA before leaving to work for Fijor Federal Services in Richland, WA. We are pleased to have Jerry back. He will be working with many of you to accomplish your R&M and construction projects as well as other contracting needs above the warrant of your Location Purchasing Staff. Jerry can be reached by phone at 309-681-6624 and by email at jlking@mwa.ars.usda.gov.

Dr. Donald Lay

Dr. Donald Lay has been selected for the Supervisory Research Animal Scientist position at the Livestock Behavior Research Unit in West Lafayette, IN. Dr. Lay received his BS in Animal Science from VPI, and his MS and PhD in Animal Ethology from Texas A&M. He is currently an Assistant Professor in Animal Science at Iowa State University. He received the Iowa State University College of Agriculture Early Achievement in Teaching Award for 2000. His research interests have been in 1) Maternal/offspring behavior of swine, 2) Stress physiology in swine, and 3) Production methods of raising swine. He has an extensive publication record both in refereed journals and extension publications and is a recent recipient of a NRI Grant. He is active in national and international animal science and ethology scientific groups. Dr. Lay will report to duty December 18, 2000.

NCAUR

NCAUR has experienced several changes since our last newsletter. The research units have been reorganized from 10 units to 8 units. Many CRIS research lead scientists, their attendant SYs and technicians were moved to different groups. Contacting scientists should not be a problem since the addresses, room numbers and telephone extensions have remained the same. Within the next few weeks we expect each research unit to receive a new name to reflect the changes brought about by the reorganization. We will let everyone know the changes once they occur.

Specific Personnel Changes:

Fermentation Biochemistry Research Unit offices have moved to Room 2058 on the second floor and Mike Cotta has been named Research Leader replacing Pat Slininger.

Mycotoxin Research Unit offices have moved to Room 1057 on the first floor.

Pat Slininger is Acting Research Leader for Bioactive Agents Research (BAR) replacing Pat Dowd who has been Acting Research Leader since Mickey McGuire accepted a position in California.

Doris Meinke, formerly Food Quality and Safety Research Unit Secretary is located in the Center Director's Office.

Perspective is everything ...

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more fortunate than the million who will not survive this week.

- If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.
- If you can worship without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more fortunate than three billion people in the world.
- If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.
- If your parents are still alive and still married, you are very rare, even in the United States.
- If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are fortunate because the majority can, but most do not.
- If you can read this message, you are more fortunate than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all.

Happy Holidays to all of you from the PASTG!

LonaJean Strickland

Sedina Lowe

Georgetta Stonewall

Heather Pace

Diane Cronk

Lori Wilson-Voss

Sandy Groneberg

Sherri Buxton